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THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
AND
COMMON SENSE

REV. HARRY JONES

3/6



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

AND

COMMON SENSE.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

AND

COMMON SENSE ;

OR

A WORKING FAITH FOR THOUGHTFUL MEN.

BY

HARRY JONES, M.A.,

INCUMBENT OF ST. LUKE'S, BERWICK STREET, SOHO.

London and Cambridge :

MACMILLAN AND CO.

1864.

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138. f. 6.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY ODELL AND IVES,
18, PRINCES STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.



PREFACE.

WHILE I abhor the affected liberalism of the day, and the conceit which would define the mystery of godliness, I venture to think that an honest study of the doctrinal tests required of the laity by the Church of England can show to most of us that there is room enough within her field for men of very different opinions to work heartily without pushing or reviling one another.

There is but one worthy aim to all, viz., the glory of God and the knowledge of His truth. To this I direct my little book, with a sure belief that those who seek these things with their whole heart are being drawn together in God, though they travel towards Him by many paths, and see different sides of all that they meet by the way.

HARRY JONES.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	7
BAPTISM	16
REPENTANCE	25
FAITH	44
OBEDIENCE	58
MEANS OF GRACE	90
PRAYER	95
PUBLIC WORSHIP	100
THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER	103
CONFIRMATION AND THE WORK OF LIFE	109

INTRODUCTION.

My object in this little book is to point one more hand, in these perilous times, at the relation between the teaching of the Church of England and the understanding of the people. I do not meddle with the tests of doctrine required of the clergy. I take those rather required of the laity, and which, simple and few in number, are found in "The Order of Confirmation" and "The Ministration of Baptism to such as are of riper years, and able to answer for themselves."

My reference to Confirmation may lead some to think that this is a mere child's book, or guide in the preparation of young people for Confirmation. I may be able to help some of them to understand better the nature of the Baptismal Vow, and so assist in the instruction of those who desire to be confirmed, but I do not write with an eye to them alone. I address those who are able to think for them-

selves, whatever their age, and I refer to the Confirmation Service, and that for the Baptism of Adults, in order that we may clearly understand what is the Church of England's test of membership. I shall have occasion to refer to this again, but I notice now, firstly and prominently, that when a man is once baptized and confirmed he is free to use all the privileges of the Church without any further test of orthodoxy. He is admitted to the Holy Communion without any question about his opinions. If he be immoral, he may be forbidden to communicate, but there is no doctrinal test on his approach to the Lord's table. And when he is officially visited by the priest upon his sick or death bed, the priest is directed to ask him simply whether he holds the Apostles' Creed. He is then directed to examine the sick man, not as to the sense in which he understands the Creed, but as to the justice and mercy of his life. And, "if the sick man humbly and heartily desire it," but without any more doctrinal test, the priest is directed to pronounce a certain form of absolution which follows, and then, if the sick man dies, he does so in the full odour of sanctity.

Thus all the privileges of the Church of England are given to one who is duly baptized and confirmed, lives a just and moral life, and who is able to say, on his death bed, when the minister repeats the Apostles' Creed to him, "All this I steadfastly believe."

But although the Church requires the communicant first to have been confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed, she does not require either confirmation or even reception of the Lord's Supper as a test of churchmanship. She invites, urges all men to communicate; she says that the two sacraments are generally necessary to salvation, she directs that every parishioner shall communicate at least three times in the year, but there is nothing to hinder a man who is only baptized, but who has never partaken of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, from receiving the last rites of the Church.

In short, a man who has been once received into the congregation of Christ's flock at the font is a churchman, and supposing him to fulfil the doctrinal test involved in Confirmation and Adult Baptism he may claim all that the Church can do for him without any fur-

ther examination into or enquiry about his opinions. No bishop, priest, court or community, has any right to ask him any more questions with a view to establishing or shaking his claim to church membership.

I am sure it is well to remember this now. The air is darkened with tests. Sects, associations, societies, vestries, parties, in and out of the Church, dissenters of all kinds, have their tests of orthodoxy or membership, more or less exacting. And these tests are not applied to the officers of the respective societies, but to their rank and file. A member is not admitted except he holds such and such opinions; he is murmured at if he questions, he is expelled if subsequently he cannot entertain them.

The effect is that men loosely attached to, or but slightly interested in the whole matter of outward and visible signs, look on the profession of Christianity, much more churchmanship, as irksome; and so become, when pressed with tests, opposed to all ecclesiastical authority, perhaps even altogether cynical about revelation. They conceive that they are bound tight down by a number of small doctrinal cords, that they cannot be true Christians or true church-

men unless they accept some set of party sentiments. I do not refer to any one party. All parties as such are objectionable. Men who are seeking for the truth resent the entangling language of this and that set of Christians, and yet they would do their work, and see their way better, with the sense of attachment to some venerable body. Thoughtful men who see what the Church, however corrupt it may have been at times, has done in the history of the world, feel suspicious of themselves if they are haunted with a consciousness of not being true to its chief present requirements.

Others again who are intensely attached to the Church sicken at the multiplication of small rules and pass words which are adopted by the various parties within its communion, and they seek relief in the Church of Rome, which is willing to receive them without any such irritating tests as meet them on all sides in the Church of England.

To these then, to both these classes, to the thoughtful men who respect the antiquity and success of the Church, and yet feel its fretting spirit of doctrinal exaction in their honest search after truth, and who if it came to a

question between the truth and the Church, would follow truth and let the Church go her own way without them; and to those fond churchmen who covet the liberty of lay Roman Catholics in this country, I address myself.

I beg them to notice the catholicism of the Church of England. To make it clearer, and to avoid the necessity for reference, I shall set down here the words which contain the Church of England's test of membership.

We will take the service for Adult Baptism first.

When a man "of riper years," from whatever side, or of whatever age, presents himself for Baptism, he is first asked, "Dost thou renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow nor be led by them?"

He is expected to answer, "I renounce them all." The next question (I need not copy out the creed here) is, "Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty," to the end of the Apostles' Creed. The answer is, "All this I steadfastly believe." The next question is,

“Wilt thou be baptized in this faith?” Answer: “That is my desire.” Last question: “Wilt thou then obediently keep God’s holy will and commandments and walk in the same all the days of thy life?” Answer: “I will endeavour so to do, God being my helper.”

If the candidate for Baptism is ready to make these answers he is baptized, and unless guilty of some grievous offence against order and decency, is entitled to an unchallenged enjoyment of all Church privileges up to his death, and burial with all the circumstances of orthodoxy when dead.

Those who are baptized in infancy are asked when they have “come to years of discretion,” “Do ye renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your baptism; ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons, and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe, and to do, all those things which your godfathers and godmothers then undertook for you?” The answer required is, “I do.” And no more doctrinal test is applied to the man unto his life’s end.

The things which his godfathers and godmothers undertook for him are thus stated in

the Catechism, from which I quote :—“They did promise and vow three things in my name. First, that I should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh (which corresponds to the first question and answer at the baptism of those of riper years); secondly, that I should believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith (which involves, as appears farther on, the holding of the Apostles’ Creed); and, thirdly, that I should keep God’s holy will and commandment, and walk in the same all the days of my life.” This last item in the baptismal vow refers to the ten commandments.

I think, therefore, we shall agree in accepting Repentance, Faith, and Obedience, expressed in the words I have quoted, as the test of admission to the Church, and I hope in the following pages to mark out some important points in which the test of churchmanship in the Church of England commends itself to our understanding. For this purpose I will consider shortly the three several conditions of admission into its fold, and the means of grace whereby alone these forms can be fulfilled


with the Spirit of God. I have chosen however only those which are treated of or inevitably involved in the Catechism, such as Prayer and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. I have not, *e.g.*, entered the great subject of Scriptural authority. Christians will find Divine guidance in its richest abundance in the Holy Bible. The Church of England bases its theology on the Scriptures. The question, however which I now venture to approach, is not the relation between the Church of England and the Bible, but that between the Church of England and human sense.

BAPTISM.

It is not my purpose to enter, here, into the great baptismal controversy.

The Church of England has not defined Holy Baptism in a way to satisfy all, but she measures its blessing in each of us by our lives. Without venturing to say how much this man or the other is excused on the score of his temperament or temptations, she assumes the necessity of his repentance, faith, and obedience. In short, practically, the Church of England teaches that the blessedness of baptismal privileges, *i.e.*, of the facts of Christianity, depends, in a great measure, as far as we are concerned, upon the use we make of them.

In following the line of thought set in the Church's exposition of what a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health, I beg to protest against the notion of the Catechism being a childish thing. It is learnt in youth only to be used unto our lives end.



I know that many think the Church's teaching to be more antique than venerable. They believe it to be not only rusty but cumbrous, that no trimming and polishing will recommend it to the clever men of our day, any more than trickery in names and paint would reinstate the cumbrous old stage coach in the place of the express train.

These are bustling times, but there is an earnest desire to learn the truth beneath the cackling surface of dispute. The pulse of the religious world flutters with a force which hints something faint about the heart, but there are many who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Some think that we are in the middle of the Church of England's second reformation, others that we now see the beginning of her end. Many men strive together hotly. Opposite factions do not burn one another now it is true; they might not if they would, the very policeman would hinder them. Fleshly persecution is now a misdemeanour. You may stone a man with hard words till he die, but if you fling so much as a pebble at him he can take out a summons against you to-morrow.

I do not affect an indifference to controversy—

we cannot shut our senses to it; but I do not wish to be controversial. Nay, more than that; because I believe that the living answer of our Church to the wants of many unsettled spirits is often hidden by religious cant, I wish, as far as possible, to escape from even the ordinary phrases of clerical instruction, and say my say in unprofessional language, upon those principles of Christianity which are taught in the catechism of our Church, and used as a test in admitting adults to her communion.

Look first at the Christian name. Baptism, when that name is given, is a religious not a civil matter. But because the registrar of births chooses generally to ask for the child's name rather than its sex, which is I believe all that he is bound to do, registration and baptism are confounded in the minds of many of the people. Registration is a good thing, but it has no more to do with baptism than the Post Office Directory has to do with the Bible. One is a revelation of God, the other a convenient accumulation of statistics.

We boast of these days of Christian enlightenment. We can buy a Prayer Book containing

full directions about baptism for twopence ; the land is flooded with tracts, religious talk, and free enquiry ; and yet many respectable people who have been educated at national schools and taken to church every Sunday, unless specially instructed by their clergyman in the matter, confound the first Christian sacrament with the last arrangement of the Registrar-General.

And why have I referred to this ? What does this show ? but that the Prayer Book has been used by the priest and people in an unreal way, that Christian customs have been kept in an unreal way, that men have not cared about the church of their fathers, that the Christian public, not the mere section of it called the religious world, but the bulk of the people, has been indifferent or half asleep in the matter.

It is awaking now, but it will not resume the habits of thought which were natural when the Prayer Book was composed. It suspects the worth of lessons which have long been neglected, or are set in an antiquated form. I am sure, however, that the true answer to many an honest sceptical spirit may be found in the

slighted teaching of our church, especially that instruction which is intended for the ripening enquiring mind.

What does the possession of a Christian name teach, but that we belong to the family of God as well as to the family of man? We have spiritual powers, almighty possibilities. It is not that we are desired to serve God, and encouraged to set cheerfully about a hard task. It is not that we are coaxed into obedience by the promise of sublime comfort when we take off the working clothes of the flesh and lie down to rest. We are not slaves whose dislike of toil is balanced by the hope of indulgence. The priest is not a humane driver come to us in the field with a message, that if we work hard and keep up our spirits we shall be set free at night-fall, and eat and be full at the table of the master himself; but that if we do not believe him there is a rod in store under which we shall look back on the sharpest toil and smiting as luxury past. No, this is not the teaching of the Church, which declares that even infants belong to a Heavenly Father rather than to a master, that they are not slaves, not little ventures in the accumulation of saints, not even

candidates for a degree in a spiritual university, which they will be examined for when they grow old and clever, but already members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

Thus we start with an assurance of relationship to Him who is strength, wisdom, and goodness. Here is the true answer to the man who sneers at the church as if it decried intellect. Some churchmen may do so, but the Church does not. She sets the human standard at its height, saying to each as he comes before her, "You are God's son, you have God's spirit." And, notice, she knows no respect of persons. She says the same to the emperor that she does to the coachman who drives him; no more, no less. The choice of a nation cannot make a man anything really higher than a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. It gives him more to do, and grants him authority to do it; that is all. One star differeth from another star in glory, not on account of the office held, but the spirit in which the duty is done. The office may be sublime while the man who fills it is small.

And the Church not only uses this equal language of all Christians, but she makes them use it too. If the chairman of the quarter sessions chances to be a clergyman, and, with magisterial rebukes, has sent the grimy poacher of his parish to gaol as an incorrigible rogue, he must yet call that rascal's dead starved child, in the face of his parishioners, at the most solemn truthful moment, upon the consecrated soil, which some day will absorb him too, "this our brother." And if the broken-hearted parent in his lonely cell tries to pray, and uses the only words he can recall out of the dim lessons of the past, when he played truant from the Sunday School, he prays for the bitterest game preserver as well as for himself when he says, "Our Father which art in Heaven, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us."

The Christian name is the assurance of the deep social relationships which are so often distorted by those advanced politicians who sneer at sectarian narrowness. The Church is the advocate, not of any form of liberalism, but of liberty itself, that liberty which offers the highest responsibility and the

sublimest career to every one of her members alike.

Some may reply, "This is very well, but we object to calling baptism a spiritual birth, the life of the soul comes out in later years and ripens slowly; we cannot say when spiritual life begins." Certainly not; who can? Baptism is not a beginning of life but a birth. Children are alive before they are born, nay, they may be said to have lived in their progenitors. So with spiritual life, its limits are a mystery; but baptism, like birth, may mark the passage into another state where fresh nourishment is offered, fresh stature and wisdom has to be reached, and fresh work has presently to be done. There is nothing in the analogy between birth and baptism which need perplex us any more than the other mysteries of the commonest infancy. There is a halo round every cradle. Of course we cannot comprehend, but we may apprehend it, we may see there is much to be learnt about it, and that the matter may not be dismissed with confidence or contempt.

At any rate it is clear that we are encouraged by the Church to rejoice in the fact of our

relationship to God Himself, and may hope that this will show itself not merely in what is now called religion, but in the loftiness of our ambition, our love of liberty and truth, our fairness, honesty, and self command, the soundness of our work and an hearty far-seeing love for man as man.

REPENTANCE.

WHATEVER may beset and prove us elsewhere, between birth and burial we are subject to human laws. Of these, the Church's ought to be the best. At least, that community which claims the Spirit of God as its guide, and professes to teach men how to live in this world, ought to set the example of wise and practicable legislation.

Putting aside, as beyond our present purpose, many questions of detail and administration, we will look at the main features of the church's teaching to those who are baptized. I think we may find in repentance, faith, obedience, and what are called the means of grace, good working laws for honest thoughtful men in all conditions of life.

First, then, every Christian of sufficient age is required to repent, *i. e.*, to think, to reflect. Repentance is not "sorrow," but "after-thought." That is the meaning of the word,

Sorrow may set people thinking, and thought may make some people sorrowful ; but one is no more the other than tears are brains. Repentance however sorrowful, must not be distracting. It is generally dressed in sad colours, and associated with passionate self-reproach and lamentation ; but “afterthought” is best when temperate, and calm. Violent expression of regret, excessive encouragement of shame and self-abasement, disturb rather than assist repentance. Repentance at its loftiest flight, in its most divine and fruitful phase, should be deep and clear. In its shallowest forms, it degenerates into affected self-accusation, or confused remorse.

Moreover, repentance is required of good people as well as bad, of the thoughtful as well as of the careless. It may mean meditation on opinions, as well as on bodily sins. Saul was “touching the righteousness of the law blameless ;” and “he verily thought with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” He was, that is, a moral and conscientious man before his conversion, and yet I suppose it would be right to say that Saul repented.

So real repentance, perhaps of the deepest truest kind, may take place in a good confident man now. He reflects. He has afterthought. He said within himself that he was quite sure, but he finds himself quite mistaken. He has acted on convictions, but he learns to suspect them. His old opinions let in the water all round. He repents with an utterness which a man whose memory is stained with some one shameful deed or habit cannot conceive. His repentance spreads through the whole fabric of his life and thought, causing sometimes pain and dismay, but still bringing life and power, if he shift his hold from even the most venerable machinery of salvation to the Saviour God Himself.

Thus, too, we can see that repentance is by no means always a sudden thing. It is sudden sometimes. A shock may turn a man. A word dropped in the full clatter of a feast, a stray sentence from the leaves of a book carelessly turned over, an incident of travel, may touch the spring in a man's heart which starts the machinery of afterthought; but in one sense there must be continuous repentance. We are perpetually committing some offence

or making some mistake, the harm of which we do not see till afterwards. We live and learn; at least if we do not learn we can hardly be said to live. Life is a correction of past errors. As we are led by the Holy Spirit, who is sent to guide us into all truth, we move on, we change our place and our views; for the traveller who never changed his views of the country would make small progress towards the end of his journey.

Repentance, therefore, though it frequently marks one great change in our life, is by no means done away with when it is once admitted. It breeds itself. Thought is the father of thought. Thus our church daily, at morning and evening prayer, however virtuous we have been in our conduct, however sincere in our devotions, sets us all to beseech God to "grant us true repentance and His Holy Spirit."

Indeed, repentance belongs to grace, not to guilt. It marks the righteous rather than the wicked, and may always be repeated with effect, though it have never failed before.

But there are times in life when repentance is most needed, most active. It is called for

by the Church at special seasons, just as unusual reflection in the discharge of our worldly business is occasionally required, although we may be uniformly thoughtful and considerate. There is, however, one period which especially demands repentance or afterthought ; I mean that in which we consciously apply the lessons of the nursery and the schoolroom to the work of life ; when we begin to think for ourselves ; when we resent detailed supervision ; when we feel that our elders have no more right to treat us as children, and we pant to make our own blunders, and take our responsible place in the great republic of life. To some this period comes with the first hairs on the chin. Others ripen slowly, and retain a childish spirit long after they have gained a manly frame. Some, apparently, die of old age, without having begun to think at all. But to most of us the time comes when we question severely the lessons of our childhood, especially those which concern religion.

Many an hour of the child's life is spent in learning "The rudiments of Christianity." He reads and is taught the Scriptures with some interest in its graphic stories, but gene-

rally with little respect for anything else in the book. The average of boys and girls care no more for their school Bible than they do for their slate. It is thumbed, thrown about, cried over, dirtied, disliked. It is anything but a Holyday book, as it should be.

In time however the mind will turn, at least glance, back upon the stores, more or less, of Scriptural teaching which it has accumulated during childhood. And—it is weak to shut our eyes to the fact—many thoughtful men turn away from them with disrelish. When the Bible-taught boy grows into a man he frequently rates his religious teaching as childish. Not so anything else, however learnt under compulsion and hated in the school-room : he prizes geography, arithmetic, French, but he discards his theology. It seems of no use to him. He does not find in it that comfort which he was taught to believe that it would give. Perhaps he takes up with some attractive scheme of philosophy, and lives honestly up to the light which it reveals ; perhaps he breaks loose from the authority of all spiritual guides, and makes the material for a *good* Christian into a cynic or a noisy scoffer.

At any rate, he frequently ceases to care about those things which the church says a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health.

This has been felt so deeply by professional teachers of the Bible, that some have ventured to discourage any thought at all. They have praised unquestioning acquiescence in their teaching above even the most honest spirit of enquiry. They have done this in all sincerity. They have rarely asked how far the teacher himself was to blame for the rejection of his teaching. Being confident about their own views of Christian facts, forgetting that they are likely enough to be too professional, whatever party in the church they may belong to, they are tempted to cry down all who venture to question them even for a moment.

And yet, with the word repentance, which means "afterthought," before us, we cannot believe in the excellence of unquestioning obedience. On the contrary, it seems, whatever some of its ministers may say, that the Church requires thought as a condition of riper years. Those who are confirmed, for instance, are reminded that they have "come to the

years of discretion." They are asked, after sufficient time for examination and reflection, whether they are willing to renew the vow made in their name, whether they acknowledge themselves bound to believe and to do as they have been taught.

Thus we see a careful provision is made by the Church of England to guard against a blind compliance with the priest's teaching. The young man is invited to test the lessons of his childhood, not with snappish conceit, but with a serious desire to sift the sense from the words he has learnt, and to have communion with the Inspiring Spirit Himself, not merely an acquaintance with one form of revelation which He uses.

The officer of the church, then, is instructed to invite the solemn earnest exercise of thought about the things of God. He encourages repentance or afterthought, not as a divine permission, but as a Christian necessity.

We will now look at some of its practical results. It is called "repentance whereby we forsake sin." It is chiefly used in this sense in the catechism. In the baptismal vow, where we learn what is expected of all Chris-

tians "unto their lives' end," it appears, under the promise laid upon the catechumen, that he should "renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh."

The words "devil," "world," "flesh," here used, are not taken haphazard out of a list of bad names. They have a special meaning where they stand in the baptismal vow. They represent three classes of sins, or three powers, specially damaging to the soul, which try to enslave us, and which we are much aided in escaping by repentance.

The devil is the impersonation of deceit. He is the father of lies. There is really nothing dashing in a devilish character, though some affect it. Partly perhaps owing to Milton, the enterprise of whose stately Satan some admire, we give the devil more than his due. He is a liar from the beginning. He appears in the drama of mankind as the deceiver, "more subtle than any beast of the field."

The devilish character is thus not even mock heroic, it is vulgar and cowardly. "Resist the devil," said St. James, "and he will flee from you."

But cunning, and carelessness about the truth, which characterise respectively positive and negative devilishness, are common, perhaps the commonest of vices. They are capable of universal exercise; we may deceive in word, in look, and in deed; we may deceive ourselves as well as our enemies and our friends, every one and thing indeed, except God. Thus the devil appears as the champion of evil against Christ. The father of lies, and therefore of unrighteousness and confusion, comes forward as the opponent of the truth, which sanctifies and frees. This is the beginning of the fight.

Hence the Christian is warned, first, against the devil and all his works. When exhibited as a deceiver, the instinct of youth revolts from him. There is nothing brilliant and attractive in the success of cruel deceit. Young people tolerate any fault but meanness, double-dealing, and dishonesty. But, God knows, they learn all too soon to look upon it with a lenient eye. First they find then another questionable practice in their way when they leave school and go to work. Some compromise with immorality in a profession, some pious

fraud, some smothering of honest enquiry, some quackery in high places, some dirty trick of trade, arrests them ; but the evil is so deep and wide-spread that they think it hopeless to contend against it. They give in. They strip their fond and honest resolutions sadly off, and with a thickened skin take their place in the stale old mill of the world. Others may fight the dragons, not they. They must eat. They would like to carry out their high chivalresque dream of purity, but they must have mutton and coals ; and so the armour of truth is folded up, and the devil enters the name of another deserter among his ill-paid rank and file.

Thus the devil and all his works creep snake-wise through the world, spreading like weeds among the stems of the sweet ripe corn, and crawling like ivy up the tower of the church. What is weak man to do ? “ Renounce them ; ” still bravely says the Church. It can be done. It has been done. If you are afraid lest people should turn their backs upon you for protesting against respectable sins, prevent this by turning your face towards God and letting the world be behind you. Renounce the meanness

and deceit in yourself which is represented by the devil and all his works. You detest them in your secret soul and at your better moods. Renounce them. It will cost you something, but in a year or two it will be all over. Do not leave this world with a habit which you hated but had not the courage to cast out. "Habit is the act of yesterday."

Another class of sins is pointed out in "the pomps and vanity of this wicked world." I protest against any set of people, employments, or amusements being marked off as the world in contrast to the Church. Pomps and vanity are now indefinable. No man can draw the boundaries of their influence. They may haunt the vestry of the church as well as the green-room of the theatre, and count their subjects in the nave as well as in the pit. They possess both sexes, and move the old man and the child.

Pomps and vanity mean hollow display. Display in itself is not wrong. The flush of the southern sunset is not wrong. The red of the rose, the sheen of the bird's wing, the march of the clouds, the glitter of the stars, the plain of the sea, the flash of the thunder-

storm are not wrong, and yet there is display in all these things. God loves display. We make the homely dusty loaf, but He gives the golden glory of the harvest.

And to come down to human life ; we find there much display which is right. Are the colours, the regimentals, and the trumpets wrong because the British soldier has won the fight in ragged silence ? Is the costly equipage of the rich nobleman wrong because he can walk ? Is the palace wrong because a king could live in a cottage with a sanded floor ? Is a sumptuous wedding wrong because any man could be legally married in the presence of a groom and a maid ? Are these things pomp and vanity ?

The bravery of uniform and march music is pomp to the coward. Display in equipage and furniture is pomp to the man who rides in a carriage he cannot pay for, and lives in a house too grand for his means. A rich marriage is pomp when there is a poor income behind it. Then these displays are wrong, but they may be quite natural and therefore right.

Again pomp and vanity are by no means confined to the rich. Many a girl thinks more

of her twopenny ribbon than the Queen does of her priceless diamonds. In all cases it is not the thing which is wrong but the heart which is set upon it. Things which are grand will make a grand show, poor things a poor show. But any pretence, any showing off for the purpose of getting undeserved credit, any puffing of a display beyond its natural size, is pomp and vanity of this wicked world.

A few words about vanity. We are most of us vain, more or less, indeed there is a certain respect for self, which apparently lies so near to vanity that it is impossible to define a distinction which however we can feel to be most true. Self respect is right, vanity is wrong.

We fancy that there is some attainment, posture, work, or attribute in which we excel. One fancies that he is witty, another that she is handsome. A man piques himself on his accomplishments, birth, sociability, cynicism, business-like habits, courage, genius, industry, good humour, scholarship. One thinks it fine to be rough, another to be smiling and soft. She is vain of her faith, he of his doubts. Every one has his or her pet virtue or vice, and is tempted to be vain of that.

We may call people sinners as long as we do not tell them of their sins. So vain men are especially sore at accusations of vanity, for the very charm of the sensation consists in mistaking it for proper pride.

But do we not despise exhibitions of self? Do they not dim the glory of the hero? Do we not weary of pet excellence when displayed by another? Do we not laugh at the people who show off, however gravely we may bow to their faces; and though we be foolish and vain ourselves, do we not love and respect those who are simple and straightforward and open?

Yes we do. And I will tell you why; because God has implanted within us an aptitude to love Him who was not vain, who honoured not Himself, who came not to do His own will but the will of Him that sent Him.

It may sound unworthy to contrast small displays of personal selfishness with so august a sacrifice as that of our Lord Jesus Christ. But nothing is small to us which taints our eternal life.

To most there is no opportunity for large display. Common-place people sin on a small scale. Our guilt is not magnificent. It is thus

especially in this matter of pomps and vanities. If we cannot astonish the world we may make more or less noise in some small circle within it, some club, court, vestry, regiment, or church. We put upon our dependents, smaller or poorer children, younger brothers and sisters, or credulous second childhood. Many a one, though hissed by the great audience of the public, finds some stage on which to act his little part and win a faint suspicion of applause. This looks bad when set down here in print, but it is kindly permitted among men. It is exhibited in what appears to be a harmless search for sympathy and appreciation. Indeed, vanity which is at the bottom of it, makes people agreeable rather than otherwise, we are gratified at finding them pleased by a little tolerance or flattery of their foibles.

But in these mean and petty ways we strengthen our love of self, and learn more and more to seek our own things and not those which are Jesus Christ's.

To get the better of all paltry selfishness and conceited love of display we can use no less a spirit than that of our Lord Jesus Christ. We shall find something there to fit us. He has

embraced within the circle of His life all experience, from the glory of the Father to the shame of the felon. He is not above helping with respect those whom the world only laughs at ; He speaks with interest and winning love where the common-place Christian is horrified, severe, or contemptuous.

The third warning to be referred to the work of repentance in the catechism is against the sinful lusts of the flesh. These truly often provoke and necessitate "afterthought." They may however be escaped, even by young men, with God's help. I am not going to say much about them. There is nothing more desolating and disastrous, nothing which more hotly ripens our decay and death, nothing which sows in the heart more deep-rooted shame and despair, than sinful fleshly lust. In some it blights the past, degrades the present, and diseases the future.

Reflection tells the Christian that he is bound, if he would love life and see good days, to renounce the sinful lusts of the flesh, indolence, impurity, intemperance. But he must guard and watch himself narrowly. He must do more than pray. The most homely and domestic

precautions, the smallest most private common-place details of self government, may affect his submission to or triumph over the lusts of the flesh, may make the difference in him between a beast and a saint. Many a one is influenced eternally by a circumstance which altogether escapes the notice of a parent or a teacher. Many triumph without a soul knowing that they have had to fight. Many damn themselves unseen. The struggle generally lies in the secret hours of ordinary life. As the Saviour was tempted alone in the wilderness so are we. Then "repentance" as the deliberate "renunciation" of evil proposals as unworthy of a child of God is effective. If a man is only tempted he has not sinned; and though the world laughs its coarse laugh or puts on its politest shrug of incredulity at the hint of a virgin soul, yet innocence is one of the things which mark the highest idea of true manhood; and, if lost, is lost for ever. Though angels may smile over the penitent it is at the healing of a sore which leaves a scar upon the soul.

And if we are not unscathed, then afterthought though bitter is blessed. We may turn

to God with honest and particular confession, being sure that if we thus addressed ourselves to Jesus Christ, God's true representative on earth, He would not be hard upon us. He shrinks from impurity, but He does not shrink from the impure man who is heartily sick and ashamed of himself, for He sees in him a longing to be free from his foul sin. If then any one feels that he has yielded to the sinful lusts of the flesh and would yet be clean, repentance or afterthought should lead him to describe himself just as he is, neither better nor worse, to the ear of God. "Tell the truth and shame the devil," says the proverb. Tell the truth to self, lay it all before the Holy Ghost, who has his temple in our bodies; then the conscience will regain by healthy use much of that vigour which was once abused, and there will be no reserve of accusation to break out against us when we lie sick or dead.

I have here set down some of our church's practical teaching about repentance. It is "afterthought," applicable both to opinions and to deeds. It is no stale theological word, but affects the daily sentiments, honesty, and self government of sensible men and women.

FAITH.

FAITH is "trust in others." That is the first meaning of the word which we translate by "faith."

Human life is a continual exercise of faith. We are compelled to believe in one another. We trust the driver of the express with our lives, the lawyer who manages our business with our fortune, the nurse with our children. We eat bread with faith in the baker, we clothe ourselves with faith in the tailor. It is impossible to stop at every turn, and stage by stage test the worth of all things before we use them. We must have faith to get through the business of the most common-place post or day. But there are many degrees of faith. We believe most in those whom we have found or can see to be true, we place guarded confidence in a stranger, we do not believe in the word of a liar at all.

One principle however guides our faith, whether it be small or great. We trust most

where we have most proof of trustworthiness, less where we are uninformed, and least where we have evidence of dishonesty. It is a great mistake to suppose that we exercise faith in cases where we cannot get evidence, and that what we do not know we must be content to believe. On the contrary, the less our knowledge of any one the less will be our faith in him. Evidence and trust grow together. The better we know God Himself the more shall we believe in Him. Knowledge can never swallow up faith. "Faith" is one of the "three" things that "abide."

Let us apply these principles to the Apostle's creed, not as an exposition of Christianity, (about which I will speak presently,) but in order to compare the grounds of our belief in God, and our belief in man.

This creed has three divisions, in each of which there is a distinct and separate ground of appeal to our reason that we should trust God.

Take the first part. "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth." This suggests a whole class of evidence that God may safely be believed in. We believe in the man who is punctual, conscientious, per-

severing, and skilful. Now, though we never apply these words to God Himself, we honour Him for those names of His to which they have reference.

We trust the man who is punctual. But what punctuality attainable in human intercourse approaches that of the cosmos? At what a uniform speed does light travel, how nicely the eclipse fits into the limit assigned by inexorable arithmetic, how punctually the tide swings the barge!

We trust the conscientious man, the man who does his work equally well for great and small. But what patient superiority to praise or blame equals that of the Worker who warms and waters the rude cottager's plot with the same care that he does the garden of the palace.

We trust the persevering man, who does not lose heart or time. But what perseverance is equal to that which spreads the grass over the field though it be a thousand times uprooted or burnt off; which may be depended upon as certain to operate as long as the same conditions are fulfilled by us?

We trust a skilful man, but how faintly does

the word skill express the nice adaptation of all things to their end in the harmony of nature! "How wonderful are Thy works, in wisdom hast Thou made them all!"

Thus we believe in one another on the same grounds that we believe in God. The deeper our knowledge the surer our trust. If God is to be trusted at all, science and true faith must grow together.

But the creed speaks of Jesus Christ; indeed the body of it recounts the main points in His history. How does this help us to believe in God? Beside the revelation in nature there is revelation in the mind of man. God appeals to us through the rose, the ant, the dew, the planet, but He appeals to us through the poet, the seer, the hero. And by the consent of all growing civilised nations, He has spoken eminently and specially in the Gospels of the New Testament. There we have an encouragement to believe in Him quite distinct from the order, punctuality, and trustworthiness which He shows in the works of nature. The heart of the sorrowful and the spirits of the martyr revive at the words of Jesus. We have manifold evidence, both from within and from without,

that He is in close relation with the power which gives life and light. He is a Son. We believe in God, and believe also in Him. Nature preaches the terror and might of God; the Gospels preach His life and love; both together give evidence that He is One whom we may trust. Not only science, but the honest study of the life of Jesus, (which is the kernel of our creed,) helps to increase our faith.

There is a third source of confidence and encouragement for us to believe in God. He works openly and faithfully in nature, He reveals Himself in prophet and psalmist, and most chiefly in the Christ; but he addresses men without any scientific or scriptural mediation. He speaks to our hearts. Conscience is the ear of the mind, and in that the Holy Spirit breathes. Conscience may mistake or shut out His meaning, it may be dull, inflamed, or excitable, like the ear, but still it is a most important member of our spiritual being; and if we keep it in natural health and use, it catches the voice of God, which sounds throughout the world of men. This is a witness to God distinct from science and Scripture. It is indeed connected with them, for it is written in

the Scripture that the Holy Spirit's office is to guide men into all truth. Still it is a separate source of trust in God, being open even to such as have no Holy Book, and to whom the testimony of science is closed or very small. It is a witness which men either follow, or deplore that they have not trusted. It proves itself true in either case, sooner or later. But it is clearest and loudest in those who, in purity, pursue truth by all means. It may cross our appetites and opinions to do so, but the more we follow the Holy Spirit speaking in our consciences, the more are we compelled to believe in Him. Thus by the very same rules which teach us to trust men, by the evidence of their trustworthiness, we are enabled to believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This threefold proof, science, the story of Jesus Christ, and the inward voice, which are channels of revelation, is enough to make most sound-hearted men believe, not perhaps in the details of prevailing theology, but in God; to have indeed such confidence in His power and love as to cast their care upon Him. They are led to face the unseen with an assurance that they are embarked with God. He is at the

helm of His own ship ; and though the night be dark and rough, He can see into the gloom and steer us right if we will but stand by our duty and listen for His commands.

We trust Him, not knowing what shall befall us, but being convinced, by experience of Him in other things, that He may be trusted. Thus our belief is deepened by our knowledge, and yet we walk by faith, not by sight.

In the latter part of the Apostles' Creed the same principles hold. We may well say that we believe in the Holy Catholic Church, understanding by "Church" that universal society which witnesses to the relation between God and man. We trust one another, but we trust those most who are holy, strong, pure, true, and patient. That is the ideal of the Church. We do not express our belief in the name, but in the thing, whether we can accurately define it or not. Next to God, we trust those whom we have reason to believe are good, and whom we naturally look for among the members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Where these exist, there is the Holy Catholic Church and the communion of saints ; and in these,

after God Himself, any good man will be ready to say, "I believe."

The remaining articles of the Christian faith we will look at in considering, very shortly,

THE APOSTLES' CREED,

AS AN EXPOSITION OF CHRISTIANITY.

Very shortly. One might be tempted into octavos while dwelling on each twig and member of those remarkable growths which we call "creeds."

This, however, the church calls "The Articles of our Belief," or of "the Christian Faith." An assent to it is required of all who are confirmed or baptized when adult, and therefore it is the doctrinal test of church membership.

Remark, first, that it is mainly an historical document. It concerns itself with facts, not opinions. Opinions are only thoughts about facts. They differ in different men, and at different ages and moods of the same man.

If a man remains stock-still in admiration of some ruin or rock his view remains unchanged, and other places about which he hears are valued according as they are ruinous or rocky. Long familiarity with one character of scenery associate with it all that we love, the

memories of childhood, marriage, work, bereavement. We compare new things with old. Ah, the grapes were riper when I was a child ! Give me the dear home of early married life and the up-hill fight once more ! This is the stock experience of the sentimental versifier and the domestic novelist. But in fact the sun does shine as brightly now as when we were children, the fruit is as ripe as ever, and the well-built house in the park or the square is much better than the cottage in the wood or the lodging over the grocer's.

This natural harmless caprice, however, is forgotten in theology. There, as elsewhere, opinions are only thoughts about facts ; they change naturally with experience and enquiry ; they vary in different men. Why quarrel about their formation and utterance among those who belong to the same church, and who honestly believe in and serve the same God ?

The Church itself is liberal. She asks for no thoughts about facts of her members, on their admission. She is content with the facts. For instance, in the Apostles' Creed, which is deliberately adopted as the doctrinal

test of Church membership, there is no opinion given upon most of those matters which form the chief subjects of discussion in the religious world. I may instance the "nature of the sacraments," "sacerdotal order," "church government," and "the limits of inspiration." Others are conspicuous for their absence to any honest reader of the Apostles' Creed. It treats of facts, and does not decide what thoughts we should have about them. These facts, which have the general assent of Christendom, and which are taken as the basis of communion in the Church of England, are so large and deep as to demand continual study, meditation, and work in order to be apprehended at all. Our whole life is a lesson to teach us more about God and man. We can all honestly serve and seek after the same truth, although we approach it from different sides or occupy different stages in the course of our progress towards it. We may have faith, deep, true, saving; and yet hold a great succession of opinions about the same fact.

Certain facts are accepted, and we want to bring our thought, and enquiry, to bear upon them, and not each try to screw, pad, and coax

the facts into the shape of our thoughts. Facts are lessons, not clay for us to model. You can learn, but you cannot "modify the facts of a case." God deliver us from this loose habit of confounding facts and thoughts in common talk! When the astronomer maps the sky, he must bring to his work, not opinions, but telescopes and reflectors and logarithms. When the artist paints a portrait he must bring, not a sketch, but observation, brains, brushes, colour, and virgin canvas. And as it is with art and science so is it with theology; we want, not "views," but "eyes to see and ears to hear."

Thus the Apostles' Creed, which contains "The Articles of the Christian's Belief," gives us facts which we may learn to believe, and not opinions about them.

Let us now look for a minute at the facts themselves, in the existence of which those who hold the Apostles' Creed agree, however different their thoughts may be about them, *i.e.*, however different their theological opinions and religious sympathies.

Notice first that the creed is not simple. I am weary of hearing about the "beautiful simplicity of the gospel." It is not simple.

Wherever you take hold of it, it runs up into a mystery. The Father is incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.

But the facts of the creed appeal to human instinct and are supported by human experience. Christianity makes its way in the world, however mysterious it may be.

The Fatherhood of God is the first fact, but this has been lost sight of in many religions old and new. Though lurking in some by-word of national sentiment, as for instance in the Athenian poet's, who said "We are His offspring," it has been veiled and painted till at last the Father sometimes appears as an Oriental despot who smiles only at the richest bribe, and hands the rude empty sinner over to the executioners of his court.

Hence the second fact in the creed : God is not inhuman. For this the creed relies upon the story of Jesus Christ as we find it in the writings of the four evangelists. The historical fact of Jesus Christ is the key-stone of Christianity, which is purest where it approaches nearest to the simple narrative, fresh sayings, and unsentimental morality of the gospels. Thus

the creed incessantly calls men back from the ingenious development of theological superstructure to the divine homeliness of the sacred story.

But there is a danger of the sacred story becoming too historical, antique, and dim by the side of daily vulgar toil and trouble. By itself it might seem as if a great drama of atonement had been enacted in the past, and now were left far behind.

Hence the third fact in the creed, to the truth of which every man's consciousness may be called as a witness. This loving God did not make a progress through His dominions many years ago, leaving only records of His state and condescension. He speaks by His Spirit. He keeps alive His union with man by daily communion and guidance in even the most common-place duties. This we feel. To this the Holy Catholic Church and communion of saints are witnesses, since we are able to correct our dismay at the offences of the one by resting upon the eternal assurance of the other. If the visible church be torn, there is still the tie of holiness before God, though men may not be able to define it.

The Apostles' Creed sums up the rest of our theology in three sentences. "I believe in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." Man must know something about man as well as about God. What touches us closest? Sin and death. It is part of the Christian belief that these things have been overcome. By what process we survive, our short and narrow experience cannot teach us. But we hug these facts. Sin is forgiven. Death is doomed.

In this chapter on faith I see how little I have said. But I am sure that I have touched the right key. No human hand can span the whole chord, but it can strike the note which is in tune with truth.

OBEDIENCE.

OBEDIENCE follows faith naturally. The two are joined together, they cannot exist in separation. As it is put in our English Bible, "without faith it is impossible to please God," *i. e.*, obedience apart from faith is an impossibility; so likewise, "faith without works is dead."

The real question then about obedience is, What shall we do? We obey God in proportion to our faith; but what are His laws, where do we find them? They are operative, immutable in all cases, but which are most pressing? Some, such as the laws of nature, avenge themselves with unfeeling impartiality. No ignorance of their operation protects us. The child which smiles and puts its finger into the candle is surely burnt. The saint and the sinner who fall over the cliff are, by the laws of gravity, alike inexorably killed.

But other laws have what I may call a

proportionate effect. The suffering which follows their infraction varies according to the ignorance of the offender. The sentence of the slaves in the parable commends itself to our sense of justice, "He which knew his lord's will, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes, but he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes.

One deduction from this would be ; cultivate ignorance, lower the man into the slave, and the slave into the brute. But our spirit resents this, the object of life is not to escape stripes, and therefore we try to learn and rise. Hence too a pressing necessity to know the Lord's will, to distinguish the voice Divine. In the Babel of demands upon our obedience from one teacher or another, we want to know which to listen to. We feel bound to keep God's commandments, but ask sometimes petulantly, if not in despair, which be they ?

That is exactly the question which the Church answers. "The same which God spake in the twentieth chapter of Exodus." This is a remarkable reply. It sweeps away with one stroke the whole crowd of Mosaic ordinances, and provides

against the accumulation of ecclesiastical rules. Much as the church prizes the Holy Bible she cuts down its thick growth of laws to ten. The rest she retains within the cover of the canonical books, but denies their present validity. We are so familiar with this revision of scriptural law, that we hardly realise its bearing on the whole question of inspired authority. I know how it is accounted for, but I think we sometimes forget the liberty which enables the church to set aside so large a portion of the Bible as a dead letter, while the descendants of the people to whom it was given, who live among us, and from whom we received it, still observe its precepts with minute obedience.

The Christian then, though possessing a great number of Biblical laws, has so interpreted Scripture as to shake most of them wholly off, and profess obedience to the "moral law" alone, as the ten commandments are generally called. This is the Christian's code. It is summed up shortly several times in the New Testament, but the church retains the original ten which were given to the Jews, and which are read aloud every Sunday to the people in the English church.

And the minister is directed to call them simply "words of God." There is no allusion to the circumstances of their delivery which we read about in the Book of Exodus. There is rather a protest against obedience enforced by the terrors of "the mount that might be touched." They are not enforced by any reference to supernatural agency, but come before the people with the assurance that "God spake these words."

How then are the people to believe that they are divine and binding? I believe that the answer lies in the name by which they are best known among Christians, the "moral law." They appeal to our sense of morality. Though they are, happily, accepted by many without reflection, because they are surrounded by all the pomp and circumstance of religion, yet to others, to men of enquiring minds, who prove all things and who must be considered, they are binding only as they are supported by the testimony of the human head and heart. To such as these I address myself.

Other laws, such as Jewish sumptuary regulations, may be needed for a particular people at a particular time, but these ten appeal to

the reason and experience of mankind. This is their charm, this the secret of their adoption by the church, and authority among men. This makes us believe that they are "God's commandments."

Let us take them one by one and look for this characteristic which divides these ten from the hundreds imposed upon the Jews.

I will first however remark, that, though few at the most, they are shortened by our Lord Jesus Christ into two. The tendency of God's teaching is to lessen the number of the laws which guide us. No one can read the Gospels aright without learning to undervalue a multiplication of small rules. These may be needed for the man who is passing from the land of bondage to that of the Lord, or for one who prefers the luxury of ecclesiastical direction to the severe liberty of Christ, but they always denote an inferior spiritual condition. The fewer the laws the holier the state, until we rise to that in which perfect love casteth out fear and is the sole code itself.

Let us now look for the common principle of appeal to the human consciousness

of right and wrong in the decalogue, noticing by the way a few examples of their indirect infraction.

First. The First Commandment says "Thou shalt have no other Gods but me." How does this touch us? We are not likely to worship Jupiter now. We may, thinks the Protestant, need some prohibition about images, but there is no likelihood of our worshipping another God. Hardly so. There is a grossness about material idolatry which marks the offence, but we can serve something short of God, *i. e.*, have another, without any shock to popular Christian sentiment. God is often dishonoured through false humility. There is a cringing pseudo-respectful spirit abroad, which deters men from dealing with principals. People don't believe that the king will really see them, so they give their message to the porter at the palace gate, and take off their hats to an agent. The king's very name is disguised, we hear of "the Deity," "the Supreme Being," "Providence," and other newspaper periphrases, instead of the good old heavenly homely name of "God."

And even where the spirit of devotion is not smothered by these polite alternatives the genuine worship of God is sometimes lost in "religion." Its worshippers have even received a name. They are "religionists." God is not in all their thoughts. They think how they may serve this and that doctrine, this and that party in the church, they do reverence to books and opinions with such abasement that they forget the homely awful God who blesses their rest, sanctifies their work, and hallows their pleasure.

This is more serious than we think. It is not merely that religious heroes push God out of His place in the heart, but we are tempted to substitute for Him things which are themselves venerable and holy. For instance, the church occupies in some minds the chief room, instead of God. So does protestantism. So does revelation. So does intellect. So does nature. So does science. Men worship noble ideas and sublime truths, and lose the freshness of the belief, that the personal God is about our path and spies out all our ways.

The Second Commandment forbids idolatry. Now we are not tempted to bow down before a graven image and pray to an idol of brass and paint, *fit* for the curiosity shop rather than the temple;

but we are tempted to worship the creature more than the Creator, and honour form above spirit. There is idol worship now, in which the externals of devotion are prized above the spirit of prayer, and the text of the law above the habit of obedience. But there is a deep rooted tendency in man's mind to protest against the worship of forms. It bursts out here and there in the world's history with bitterness. It produces Mahometan image breakers, French revolutionists, Puritan reformers, Protestant mobs. It has its awful and its vulgar phases. To this the second commandment appeals. This makes it universal, moral, suited to the great human consciousness of right and wrong, which sooner or later condemns shams, whether they appear in the gross shape of an ugly heathen image, or in an excessive sentimental exaltation of Christian symbols.

I may add that idolatry appears not only in "religion" but in common life. The man who worships money makes gold his god, as much as if he had melted it into a human or inhuman likeness. A man who makes the gratification of his senses the main business of his life is as truly a worshipper of Belial as the sensual devotee at the ancient altars of that name.

The Third Commandment teaches us the honour due to God's name. Here we learn the sacredness of words. We are not forbidden to use God's name, but to use it in vain, emptily, or carelessly. This commandment does not condemn swearing alone; nay, the genuine oath which rises at a crisis of deep feeling, even though not legalized by the custom of our courts, is probably less opposed to the spirit of the third commandment than a joke upon sacred things which too often passes unchecked in Christian or clerical society. But whatever the guilt of downright damning and cursing, in all cases it is vulgar and impotent.

It is vulgar, for the man of the world now makes it a point to eschew surprise and expression of feeling. The very nickname, of "yea, nay," given to his manner, curiously enough hints at a mock resemblance between his "conversation," and that which takes the highest Christian model.

It is impotent, for we cannot really consign the man to perdition whom we damn. With a torrent of curses we cannot make one hair white or black. Indeed, the violent swearer almost always loses influence by his swearing, people think his

reasons to be few if his oaths are many. They make no impression but one of disgust and incredulity, and then they return to him who uses them. "Curses," says the proverb, "are like chickens, they come home to roost."

The objection to judicial swearing entertained, or at least expressed by some, is too flimsy and childish to bear a sensible answer. An oath in a court of justice is to a bare assertion only what a judge in his robes is to a judge without them. It is merely a word with a wig on.

Perhaps the letter of the third commandment is broken more in the church than elsewhere. We take God's name in vain when we let our thoughts ramble off while we repeat the words and retain the posture of prayer. We do not then, it is true, use "bad language" in the ears of the world, but we do before Him who can judge between the genuine and counterfeit word. We offend God alone, instead of God and man together. Indeed, I believe there is quite as much literal breaking of the third commandment in the pew as there is in the public house.

I have already hinted at another common transgression of its spirit. There is nothing of the kind more mischievous than a trick of trifling about

sacred things. Many a one who has accumulated at careless times a store of jokes about religion, would be glad to dismiss them all from his memory, as the grim work of life creeps over him, and occasionally he finds his prayers, his meditation, and his reading of the Bible crossed by some impudent jest. But this imp of wit mocks our grave indignation and leaves its profane deposit on the very face of holiness itself.

The third commandment however is very broad. I might point out many other phases of departure from its spirit. It is universal. The name of the Lord sanctifies words. It appeals to the sentiment of mankind which requires that an oath shall be sacred, and good faith shall be shown in prayer. This gives its title to a place in the moral law. This makes all men feel the need of it at all times.

Some might fancy at first that in the Fourth Commandment we had one which rested purely on the Divine will. But nothing appeals more truly to the universal necessities of mankind. It is not merely that we need rest, but we need to be justified in resting. It is easy to throw down our tools and say, "I will work no more;" but if the world around us goes on working, and we win

no sympathy in our solitary protest, we pick them up wearily again, and bend our back once more over the task.

The fourth commandment not only justifies and blesses rest, but it insists upon it, and it thus appeals to the deeper characteristic wants of humanity. Men don't want to rest like oxen. The ox which can get loose from the team will munch in perfect peace though its fellows be goaded to death before its eyes. Not so man. We share fatigue with cattle it is true, but he is a brute who can enjoy his rest while all men toil around him.

It is the fashion now to contrast Christian liberty with Jewish bondage, but any change of law or custom which weakened the respect of Christians for the sacredness of Sunday rest, anything which for the ostensible purpose of granting more freedom to workers on that day lessened the general sense of the unlawfulness rather than the inexpediency of Sunday work, would really tend to destroy that which is now one great charm of Sunday rest, I mean compulsion. A man rests with most comfort, not only when rest is lawful, but when work is wrong. The fly in the ointment of repose is conscience. A man

lying somewhat later than usual in his bed, or sitting in the grateful shade beyond the ordinary dinner hour, says to himself, "This is very pleasant, but I ought to be about my business." But on Sunday, as Sunday is happily now observed in England, he may repose unrebuked from without or from within. Weaken this sentiment of compulsory rest, and you weaken the charm of Sunday which is the protection of energetic sensitive men.

There are, however, several ways in which this fourth commandment appeals to the consciousness and experience of mankind. Seven has been always a mystic number. There seem to be many cycles of life determined by some multiple of seven. Children leave the infant school at seven, the voice breaks at fourteen, and majority is attained at twenty-one. There are seven ages of man. The days of our life are three-score years and ten. It is said that the whole frame is renewed once in seven years. There is even a resemblance if not an analogy between the tenure of a man's life and the house in which he lives. Hence the setting apart one day in seven for rest appeals to our experience. It is agreeable to those physical laws with which man is ac-

quainted, and which he has applied in arranging the limits of human relationships.

You will observe that I do not dwell here or elsewhere upon the wisdom and power of God, as shown in this or any other of the ten commandments. That is eminent. My object in this little book is to show how the main doctrines of Christianity appeal to the consciousness and common sense of mankind, which is no small proof of their great origin.

A word more about the fourth commandment. When we talk of the sacredness of rest, we must have no grand far-fetched notions about it. The fourth commandment speaks of work, work which makes the eyes weary and the hand hard; daily vulgar work; the doing what we have to do; work which most associate with back-ache and sweat. However noble and divine when we look at it in some lights, in others work is toilsome and degrading. It roughens and relaxes us, often making us while we are at it selfish and coarse, and leaving us when we have done it exhausted or sensual. We see how it can debase a man when too heavy and continuous, crushing him down till he dies before his time, or blindly seeks relief in drink and gross debauchery.

There is a curse in labour. People who don't know what it is may call it a fine thing, but the noblest workman is sometimes glad to lay down his tools. In sorrow do we eat of the fruit of the ground all the days of our life.

No doubt, work is said to be God's as well as rest. But those who work hard generally do so because they cannot help it. They are glad to leave off. The fourth commandment is a recognition of this gladness. It appeals to a great human want all over the world.

But it consecrates this want. In the grand imagery of this commandment God is represented as being glad of His Sabbath. "In six days He made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; *wherefore* the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it." As if a great calm came over Him and His new created worlds when the wheel of the mighty Potter stood still, and He saw all that He had made. It was very good.

Thus the fourth commandment not only answers a great human want, but it teaches, what we feel, that mere cessation from work does not satisfy us. We want refreshment and recreation worthy of our relationship to God.

There is something very low and mean in much modern rest. The holy day becomes a mere vulgar holiday. There is an air of ungodly relaxation or bustling smartness about it, instead of sacred rest. No doubt there is much repose of brain and muscle, much sound sleep and comfortable yielding to the sense of fatigue, but man needs something more than this. A dull yawning defiance of the rest of the week, enlivened by the bottle instead of the inspiration divine is not enough for our necessities. All the most simple and ambitious souls protest against such degraded recreation. People who do not profess to be religious, using the word in its modern sense, condemn it. In fact they agree with the sentiment of the fourth commandment, which lays great stress upon the high character of the seventh day's rest. Its sacredness is not a superstition of the lowest but a persuasion of the highest souls. Those who respect themselves and the proprieties of life the most, are the first to acknowledge the obligation of the Lord's Day. We see this in all ranks. Godliness and cleanliness generally go together. I am far from thinking little even about Sunday clothes. Decent dress is not unfrequently the sign of a decent mind. The apparel oft proclaims the man.

From these and other considerations we may be assured that the holiness of Sabbath rest is not merely a Jewish doctrine, but a universal want. It should be greeted with gladness both because body and soul are bound together, so that what relieves the one should be suited to the other, and also because, as I said at the first, compulsion alone, which is its chief charm, can secure that comfortable sense of Sabbath calm which makes the genuine Sabbath. If the Sabbath were merely of man's institution, some men, and those probably who deserved rest the most, might think themselves moved by God to labour beyond their strength, whereas happy is he who believes that the day is the Lord's, and rests with a delightful sense of immunity from the prickings of a busy conscience.

Hence, too, we may plead that parsons, policemen, doctors, domestic servants, and others who must work more or less on Sunday, but especially those who have duties involving much anxiety during the rest of the week, ought if possible to have extra rest and recreation at other times. The loss of the Sunday is not made up by twelve hours off duty at any other time. To a man who *feels* that we are every one members one of an-

other, no solitary rest can bring the relief which belongs to that day which is the Lord's, and yet with special fitness for our use, was "made for man."

Before passing on to the last six commandments, I will remark that it is not without deep reason that we find the "duty towards our neighbour" placed after the "duty towards God." It is impossible to love our brother fully unless we love God. He alone can enable us to serve man aright.


There are two ways of keeping a commandment. In the letter and in the spirit. There are two motives of obedience, fear and love. For instance, you may hinder a man from committing a murder by putting a pistol to his head, but though he thus abstained from murder he would not be keeping the spirit of the sixth commandment, nor be doing his duty towards his neighbour. He abstains, not because he dreads doing an injury to another, but because he dislikes receiving one himself. Fear cannot make saints, but it may restrain sinners.

While, however, we protect ourselves by human legislation, and try to deter the unprincipled from offences against society by the jail, the tran-

sport, and the gallows, we feel that all these precautions, and all these implements of justice are degrading to humanity. We press the condemned criminal with godly exhortations; we strive to raise his thoughts to heaven even when we pronounce him unfit for earth; we beseech him to trust in God even when we have determined that he shall no longer be trusted in the society of men. And the same effort to bring the offender into contact with a higher power is made whatever the amount of punishment we inflict; whatever the gravity of the crime which he has committed. Thus though we are sometimes compelled, for self-preservation, to appeal to the lower motives which influence mankind, yet at the same time we admit their need of those which are higher. Our reformatories, tickets of leave, penal prisons, nay even our sentimental expressions of interest in infamous offenders are all proofs that we accept the latter part of the decalogue as "Words of God." They are laws which appeal not only to our selfish fears but to the want we feel of some great divine principle which shall direct our lives, which shall bind up our homes, guard our persons, purify our love, protect our goods, defend our character, and check our greed-

ness. They come to us from above and address not the necessities of any particular people or period in a nation's life, but all men at all times. They rely for their adoption and influence not upon any incomprehensible edict enforced by a supreme power, but upon the human consciousness of right and wrong which we have through our relation to God. We receive them gladly, and show in many ways that we admire them above the best machinery of human justice and legislation.

Before looking for the appeal to our moral sense in each item of the latter portion of the decalogue, we may notice that they are almost all prohibitions. This is a saddening thought, for we feel how true it is. Who that knows anything of himself but sees not merely capacities for sinning but inclinations to sin, which are, in polite society, supposed to exist only in ill-educated, ignorant, or irreligious people. Our great difficulty is how to check ourselves, to limit our desires. There is abundant energy, but it is only too likely to spend itself in the wrong direction. And therefore most of the commandments are prohibitory. Thou shalt not do this, thou shalt not do that.



The first of the six is the sole exception to this rule. It is called the commandment "with promise." "Honour thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

The command to honour parents is universally accepted among growing civilized nations. This is remarkable. It shows a man to be a being of a higher order than other animals. They never honour their parents. The parent bird loves its offspring, for a time, and with such devotion as to supply images wherewith to whip the jaded feelings of humanity, but no adult animal except man shows any filial affection or respect. I doubt whether a horse knows the dam who suckled and whinnied after its long-legged youth. A full grown affectionate accomplished dog will fly at its father's throat. Nature teaches many brutes to desert their progenitors when they are no longer useful as nurses, and in many instances to despatch them as encumbrances when they are old and feeble. It is true that we read in books of travel about the inhuman behaviour of some savage people towards their parents, but we shall find that it arises from some desire to make death and the happy hunting fields or

place of dreams pleasant to the sufferer, not from ill will.

The fifth commandment is greeted with general approval, though it may often be disobeyed. It appeals to our growing consciousness of right and wrong, being perhaps respected by us the most when we are no longer what the world calls children. The infant kicks and screams under caresses, the child resents expressions of anxiety about its health, the youth frets under grave advice and the saws of parental wisdom, but the full grown man, if happy in having a dear old white haired mother who treats him like a boy, loves her with a fondness which he never felt before. This natural growing aptitude in man to honour his parents is appealed to by St. John, when he addresses old and young as little children; and it gives the first charm to the prayer, "Our Father which art in Heaven." Indeed the reverence paid to parents is more or less divine. It is quite independent of the period of dependence. It rises not from gratitude but from love. There is something low and inhuman in the motive set before a child, to show respect to his parents because they showed kindness to him when an infant. Fancy a mother thinking that she

put her babe under an obligation when she suckled it, and consciously establishing a claim to future support when she led it across the nursery with her fore-finger.

But what is the "promise" in the fifth commandment? What makes it of universal application? The Jews may have understood "the land which the Lord gives" to mean Canaan, but what are we to understand by it? It has no place on the map, but it exists wherever those things are found which were to be the characteristics of Canaan. Liberty, patriotism, law, order, combined with productiveness, make any place a land which the Lord our God giveth. England is, we trust, to the English a land which the Lord giveth. So is Switzerland to the Swiss. So is not Poland to the Poles, nor Virginia to the Negro.

But how does the connection between the honouring of parents and national prosperity appeal to human experience. I think that the question when put in this form will answer itself to many at once. Respect for law ensures wise legislation and administrative tolerance. When men defy the regulations by which they are surrounded, and the authority which touches them

closest, they disregard that which holds the nation together. Let them honour the powers that be, and then they have a right to modify their influence or change their form; but once dishonour the powers that be, and defy existing authority, then you either bring down their vengeance upon yourself with irritating result, or you destroy your chance of being listened to yourself when you take the reins into your own hands. Depend upon it, there is an appeal to the truest human experience, an appeal which all statesmen and political economists may recognise as deeply wise in the words, "Honour thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land which thy God giveth thee."

The Sixth Commandment forbids murder. This may seem to appeal plainly to common human instinct. But murder does not mean merely the felonious crime which we commonly understand by it. It means more than the secret poison, the stab in the dark, and the push into the midnight river. This sixth commandment elsewhere appears in the form "Thou shalt not kill." And how does this appeal to human instincts? Men who do not like to be killed themselves, seem to like killing others. Science and art strain themselves

to multiply and perfect means for the destruction of life. The rifle has become the plaything of our youth. The armies of Christian Europe far exceed in number those of Pagan Rome. Is there some great flaw in the character of our Christian civilization shown in the alternative of an appeal to arms, which alone is supposed to make diplomatic reasoning effective? Is the Gospel a gigantic failure? Says Count this to Baron that, "Listen to me or I will bring as many of my people as I can, to kill as many of your people as they can catch." This is eminently the English argument. "Let the British soldier only cross bayonets with the enemy!" cries the pensioner over his grog, leaving the rest of the sentiment safely to the company, who hold it as an axiom of war that an Englishman slays an enemy with his own hand when he can. To what natural instinct or consciousness of right and wrong, then, does the minister appeal when he reads aloud the words "Thou shalt do no murder?"

Not merely to the instinct that life is sweet. This does not always justify, though it perfects the apparatus of vengeance. War is defended on the assumption that man shrinks more from death than from anything else. And yet at the same time

great efforts are made to deprive it in practice of all personal bitterness between the combatants. The good soldier kills and is killed by rule. He does not break the spirit of the sixth commandment. He bears no malice nor hatred in his heart. He would not hurt the feelings of the man he shoots. He prays for his enemies and then pulls his trigger on them. This, which is no specious nor satirical view of his character, is really the great proof that although Christian nations go to war one with another, and destroy human life wholesale, the sentiment of the people accepts the spirit of the sixth commandment as both of corporate and individual application, and protests against that feeling of ill will which constitutes the immorality of killing, that hatred of a brother which makes the man who entertains it a murderer.

Indeed he who nurses a hatred of his neighbour, but dares not harm him for fear of the consequences to himself, transgresses this commandment more than the man who gives the word of command to charge, or fire, and then will gently hold his flask to the lips of a wounded enemy.

I will not dwell upon the morality of the

Seventh Commandment. It appeals to the desire for confidence and purity at home. This is ill preserved when each man is compelled to guard his dearest personal rights. There can be no true love when the husband is a sentinel over his wife, however effective the arrangements by which he ensures her faithfulness. There must be a higher influence to guide and protect them both. This mankind wants, and it is supplied by the sacredness of the seventh commandment. Thus too, we can see that the harm done by the adulterer reaches beyond the home he has polluted. It lessens the general sense of trust we have in the influence of Christianity. Every marriage tie is more or less injured when one is broken.

The Eighth Commandment also addresses more than our natural tenacity. We like to feel that we may depend upon something beyond selfishness to keep safe our goods. We do not say "let us alone to look after our own." When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods may be in peace, but he is not. He is always liable to alarm from one stronger than he. We all crave the influence of some higher protective power than we can exercise ourselves. Hence we see

that the eighth commandment appeals not to the thief and the thievish propensities of human nature, but to all men as related to God, giving them a higher security than arises from any armour wherein we trust.

A word about indirect violation of this eighth commandment. Our church explains it in a homely way in the "duty towards our neighbour," where we are bidden to "keep our hands from picking and stealing." But it means more than this. In an age of competitive commercial activity we are continually tempted to make a gain by unfair means. There is many a one who thinks it no shame to overreach a tradesman, but who would blush to take from his till by sleight of hand what he takes by sleight of wit. The tradesman on the other side argues, I am obliged to protect myself, to restore the balance of my gains by some set off against the shrewd practice which is employed against me. So he adulterates his goods, forgetting at the same time that he adulterates himself. When he sands his sugar he mixes some grains of thief along with the original material of the honest citizen.

The Ninth Commandment appeals to our sense of the sacredness of words, especially in our deal-

ings one with another. What I have said about the third commandment applies to this. I will add but little more.

However, I may remark that slander which is chiefly forbidden here, cannot be prevented by any human legislation. We may lock our doors against the thief but we cannot protect our character against slander. Rich men may guard their gold, but good men cannot guard their reputation. Hence the need for some appeal to a higher law which shall justify the righteous. It is a great comfort to think that God concerns Himself with prohibiting slander, and sets it in the same row with perjury, murder, and theft. Perjury is not common, for it is a criminal offence, but slander is a fashionable sin into which most of us sometimes slide almost unconsciously. Indeed one kind of slander is, we may fear, committed by "religious" people as frequently as by any. They undervalue the character of those who differ from them in opinion. "I cannot," says one, "conceive how a thoughtful Papist can be a good man." He is right in thinking that he himself could not honestly profess Romanism, but the Romanist is right in thinking that he could not affect Protestantism without doing violence to his conscience.

So each, judging the other by himself, sets down his neighbour as a bad man, when they are both severally conscientious. Many a child is unjustly prejudiced against whole classes of his fellow creatures simply because his parent or teacher holds what are called "strong religious opinions."

The Tenth Commandment has perhaps caused more honest difficulty than any other. How comes it to be placed among the ten supreme laws of God? What is the immorality of coveting? It is not wrong to wish for what we have not got. You may wish and work, say, for an increase of income without breaking the tenth commandment. We may covet more health, rest, work, influence, success, money, than we possess. They are legitimate and desirable enough. The force of the prohibition here lies in the word "neighbour." There are plenty of fair prizes in the world which are public property, which no one is injured by our coveting. The keener the industry of the people so much the more can they all be benefited and gain what they desire. But covetousness of our neighbour's property lessens the security of our own possession, and draws our attention away from the great stock out of which he has enriched himself. The mere dwelling

upon the thought of another man's goods, and the contrast between his fortune and ours unsettles and weakens us. It hinders our getting what we have a right to desire. Supposing the tenth commandment universally broken and men set upon taking their neighbours' goods, all progress would cease. No addition to a nation's wealth would be made from the sources which are open to all, and there would be no security for the possession of whatever property each man might have acquired. Depend upon it, this last commandment is of no less value than any of its companions. It appeals to that desire for individual safety and independence without which we can neither give nor take in the great intercourse of humanity.

In looking back for a moment upon the ground of Obedience over which we have just passed, I think we shall see enough to feel that all the laws which we are called upon as Christians to obey appeal to the human sense of what is right. God is no arbitrary tyrant who enforces his own will, however unintelligible to the minds, and repulsive to the feelings of his subjects. There are, no doubt, some men with diseased consciences which the wisdom and kindness of God do not affect;

who defend their violations of the moral law. Society must protect itself by physical means from these just as much as from the criminals who do what they know to be wrong for the sake of some selfish gain. But the authority of the Church of England rests on no ground but such as admits of an appeal to the spirit of the Christian himself. She takes the moral law as her code, and, whatever some of her officers might prefer, requires unquestioning obedience from none of her members.

MEANS OF GRACE.

I HAVE tried to set forth some of the common-sense phases of Christianity. Without any desire to lessen our sense of the mystery of godliness, or to call that simple which is not simple, I have noticed how plainly the Church of England appeals to the heart and head of man, how it shrinks from demanding a blind assent to her doctrines. She requires Repentance, which is "after-thought," as the first condition of baptism, or admission into membership with the Christian body. She makes Faith to be trust in a living God, and not merely assent to a set of doctrines; trust in a person, encouraged by three great clusters of evidence received through nature, the Gospel history, and conscience. And moreover in teaching us Obedience she sets before us not any Mosaic regulations, nor any ecclesiastical rules, but the ten commandments, which are the *moral law*. We can see how these appeal, not to the fears and superstition of men, but to their conscience,

common-sense, experience, and wants. And in these three things, Repentance, Faith, and Obedience, as contained in the baptismal vow, the apostles' creed, and the ten commandments, we have the essentials of Christianity. We are told what to resist and renounce, what to believe, and what to do.

But however plain this summary of the Church's teaching, however strongly it commends itself to our sense of what is right, we cannot observe it of ourselves. It is not easy to do a thing merely because we see that it is good. Our lives are not always what we admire. We gaze up into heaven and then we stumble in the dirty street. We leave the oracle, possessed, as we suppose, with the presence of God, and the next hour we are tripped up by some contemptible trifle which rubs the bloom off our complacency. We are always catching ourselves in some act or thought which is in humbling contrast to our heart's desire.

What shall we do then? Sit down with a sigh at the failure of the attempt? Or shall we repose ourselves philosophically, saying, "Let be! whatever is, is right!" and try to look on sin and suffering like an idler at a casement who

watches the hail and the rain? No, indeed. We cannot be satisfied with the best apprehension of Repentance, Faith, and Obedience. The Christian knows these things only to do them. He is a man of action. He must spend himself and be spent. He must give his life. For him there is no drawing aside in superior contemplative calm. He is a soldier of Christ, and must enter into the fight.

But a man may say, "I agree, I know that Repentance, Faith, and Obedience are no mere idle words. I know that the Christian is bound to fight manfully under Christ's banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier unto his life's end. I know all this, but I cannot do it. I admire the picture, but I cannot realise the fact. Many shall seek to enter into the kingdom of heaven and few shall be able. Happy few! Happy those who can renounce the evil habits of life and thought, happy those who can trust God, happy those who can do what they feel to be just and good."

And then the thought comes. "It is a mere matter of birth, temper, habit, health. I can't change these things. I ought to repent, believe, and obey, but I must remain as I am. To will

is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not."

Not so. With men this is impossible, but not with God. He can move and strengthen us, even when we seem to be set fast. The mill cannot turn itself, but it is turned when it meets the wind with wide-spread arms or dips its wheel into the stream. And so with us. With all our knowledge, and consent unto the teaching of the Church that it is good, we can do nothing without the Spirit of the Lord, which is the wind of God.

Repentance, Faith, and Obedience are set before us as the conditions of salvation. We admit their wisdom and necessity, but we can do none of these things without God's grace.

This is the teaching of the Church to a member on his admission. After being finally asked whether he will obediently keep God's holy will and commandments and walk in the same all the days of his life, the answer put into his mouth is, "I will endeavour so to do, God being my helper."

I will therefore conclude what I have to say about the teaching of the Church by a few words on three of the means by which we seek for God's help: I refer to Prayer, Public Worship, and the

Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. There are other ways by which we draw near to God, but I wish to confine myself to these as belonging most especially to our state as members of the Church.

PRAYER.

THE first answer to the difficulty we feel in leading a Christian life, according to our conscience, is "Pray." Prayer puts us into quick and special communion with God. When a man opens his heart to pray, not only does the prayer go up but God comes down. When the warm desire breaks out of the soul, heaven itself is poured into the rent. By prayer we touch the Author of life and live.

The object of prayer is to make our will agree with God's, not God's will with ours. We do not pray for what we think we should like, but for what He thinks we want. The very fact of God's knowing what things we have need of before we ask Him, is our greatest encouragement in prayer. Even in making petitions to a fellow creature, the better he is acquainted with our case the more confident are we in addressing him. Take an example. The patient who asks a doctor to let him

get up, does so all the more hopefully as he trusts his skill, and thinks that he will decide aright. If he has perfect confidence in his doctor, he is satisfied with the answer whatever it may be. The customer who asks the shopman for a coat that shall suit him, does so the more confidently as he believes the shopman is honest and knows what to recommend. In all intercourse between man and man the desire to make a request is measured by the prospect of its being granted in a way which shall suit us best. We prefer our own will only when we think we know better than our neighbour what we want. If then we really wish for what is right, and believe that God knows perfectly what that is, we have the greatest possible inducement to pray to Him. Even if we pray amiss we have the comfort of thinking that he will correct our prayer. But to assume that God will give us what is right, without prayer, because He loves us and knows what things we have need of before we ask Him, is to assume a relationship between Him and us, which, according to all our experience of spiritual or mental intercourse, is unnatural. We are His children, and pray to our Father. But what sort of family would that be, in which the child never, by

word, or kiss, or glance, appealed to its father, because, forsooth, it knew that he was well aware that it wanted meat, drink, clothes, holidays, and play-things, and that he would give what he pleased? We are God's children, and communion with Him in prayer, and its answer, is only a greater mystery than the intercourse of a family on earth; neither can be explained. Both are natural.

But if any one still harps on the frequent contrast between our wishes and God's gifts, let me remind him that the Church of England especially guards herself against leading any one of her members to suppose that he will get what he thinks he wants by prayer. She sets us to pray "through Jesus Christ our Lord." That is the rectifying clause in all her prayers. We may understand by it that no petition can be granted except when put up in the spirit of Jesus Christ. He prayed "Not My will but Thine be done." Whatever theories and opinions therefore some men may have about prayer, the incessant termination of those used by the church shows the main use which she makes of them, namely, to bring the minds of her members into agreement with the mind of Christ.

By prayer then, first, the Christian seeks for
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that help which he needs in his endeavour to keep God's holy will and commandments.

We pray in order to do what God wills, rather than to get what we want. And thus we have at last what we desire, for our desires grow to a likeness with His, and our prayers coincide with His purposes.

I will not dwell upon different kinds of prayer, nor times when it ought to be used. There is one pattern set us by our Lord Jesus Christ, which checks all selfish desire, inasmuch as we use the word "our" not "my," and ask for God's will to be done before our daily bread is given.

As to the hours of private prayer, if they are stiffly marked, some men may be helped in their devotions, but probably the prayers of others will become perfunctory and flat.

The charm of a prayer is not the punctuality of its repetition nor the beauty of its language, but the desire of the heart which accompanies it. We are advised by an Apostle to "pray without ceasing." I am afraid that even the becoming habit of kneeling down to pray, when we rise in the morning and lie down at night, has tended to harden itself into a rule which some people follow, as if it released them from the necessity

of prayer at any other time. A severe insisting upon stated hours for devotion has helped to establish the phrase "saying prayers" instead of "praying." The true Christian carries about with him a sort of spiritual telegraph between earth and heaven. He prays without ceasing; at times which worldly men would think most unlikely and inconvenient, if not unbecoming, and about things which no one suspects him of making the subject of prayer. Quicker than any mystic message which flies along the solitary wire, his thought ever flashes up into the palace of his King, and the pulse of his desire beats in his Father's presence.

PUBLIC WORSHIP.

THERE are many who say, "What is the use of this? We can pray to and praise God in private." I dislike this greedy question "What shall I get by it?" so often dragged into our estimate of godliness. Suppose that a family of children were to say, "What is the use of dining with our father on his birthday? He will send us a plateful of meat and a glass of wine into our own rooms, it will be as good there as anywhere, we will eat and drink each one by himself, or with some two or three family pets." If this is unnatural, so is isolated devotion.

To a man of sound body and mind public worship or its equivalent is a necessity. He must have communion with his kind in seeking what his heart is set upon. If his heart is not set upon God, then of course the contagion of public worship has no charms for him. But a man desirous in his better moods of living as becomes a *Christian*, although feeling sometimes a disrelish for the

service of his church, would unquestionably find comfort in it if he gave it a fair trial. It is common sense to seek the aid of sympathy in cultivating any desire, or in gaining any object. I fear however that many thoughtful laymen, especially in large towns, where their absence from church is not likely to be productive of any troublesome comment, are deterred from public worship by the questionable sense which some of us parsons talk in the pulpit. It certainly does seem hard, that an intelligent well disposed Christian should rarely be able to join in our common prayers on Sundays, without being obliged to submit to a common sermon; but still, even with this drawback, he would find public worship a great support to his resolution to keep God's commandments. If he really went to worship instead of to criticise he would be blessed in the use of those prayers which have been the channels of devotion to many a true saint. Probably, too, if the preacher were an earnest man and had his heart in his work, however illiterate and illogical he might be, there would be something to learn. But if the preacher were hopelessly irritating and heartless, why then I would advise the thoughtful layman to pick up

his hat and walk out of the church, as soon as, or rather before the sermon began. At any rate do not let him be kept away from public worship by the character of the public instruction he hears in the church. The departure of a portion of the congregation at the end of the morning prayers might have a most useful effect upon the people and the minister; the former would have a hint that listening to sermons formed no necessary part of the test of church membership or Christian worship, and the latter might repent of his ways, and learn to understand and discharge his duty as a priest better than he had done before.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THIS is a chief means of grace, but not strictly a test of churchmanship. I have a weekly celebration of the Holy Communion in my own Church, and most devoutly wish that every well-minded Christian would receive it regularly. The Eucharist is the crown and flower of public worship. But it is a means towards an end, we cannot even dare to say that it is a test of entrance into a state of salvation. We have no right to assume that every one who does not communicate is guilty of conscious disobedience to our Lord's words. We must take care not to press the saying, "Do this as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of Me," with too sweeping and severe an application. The washing of the disciples' feet was performed with great emphasis and deliberation. "After He had washed their feet and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye

call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." Now all this was done at the last Supper, and has received this prominent and elaborate notice in St. John's record of that evening's events to the exclusion of any account of the institution of the Holy Communion, which was then celebrated for the first time. I do not say that we are not perfectly right in cherishing one of these symbolical actions as a sacrament of the Church of England, and dropping all reference to the other in our liturgy; but a church which puts the Bible into the hands of her members, with permission to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it, with of course such powers of understanding and spiritual digestion as they may have, cannot condemn a man as inexcusably disobedient to the command of Christ, when he neglects to commemorate the breaking of bread, and sees no allusion to the washing of feet in the service of his church. Say, if you will, that the reception of the Holy Communion is enjoined by the church, upon the strength and in virtue of Christ's command, but

do not sentence a man as directly defiant of Christ Himself if he does not communicate. The reception of the Lord's Supper is not a test of church membership. You may claim all the church's privileges, marriage, churching of women, the prayers of the congregation, the visitation of the sick, authoritative absolution on a death-bed, if you will, and burial with the full rites of the church, without having once received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. I am not inquiring whether this is advisable or not. I am only drawing attention to a fact, and beg to enter my protest against any practice of making a test which is not sanctioned by the law.

But, if he will believe it, the Christian will find the Holy Communion an effective means of grace. It is not only universal in Christendom, but it appeals to our sense of what is right and needful. Baptism may be called the retrospective sacrament. It is an assurance that God washes sin away from the souls of those who repent, as water washes dirt away from the soiled face. But men look forward as well as back. They are not only disturbed about the past, but apprehensive about the future.

Suppose the past wiped out. Suppose you are

cleansed from the guilt of old sin, how are you to keep clean for the future? If you have been healed of a disease how are you to secure health afterwards? There is an assurance that this want will be answered in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which represents in the economy of grace what food is in the order of our common life. It teaches us that God is not only one who cleanses, but one who feeds us. There is no magic in it, no inevitable effect in its reception. When we take it, the soul is not consciously cheered by the grace of God as the body is stimulated by wine. Its operation is a mystery, like that of all other spiritual influences. Our ignorance of the exact connection between its cause and effect need not deter us. Indeed I fear it deters fewer than we think. Many refuse to communicate, not because of mysterious scruples which they cannot solve, but because of common-place sins which they will not give up. But to him who simply wishes to think and do right, the Holy Communion will be found full of meaning and comfort. He who really desires to be Christ-like, to see things with a double sense, to enjoy the parabolic vision of this earth, and to hear the voice divine which ever sounds throughout the world, but is articu-

late only to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, will rejoice in the reception of the Holy Communion as the sublimest and yet simplest realisation of our relationship to and dependence upon God.

And this is a sacrament of perpetual repetition. The past is one glance. When we look back upon what we have learnt as Christians we see Baptism, assuring us of our sonship, forgiveness, inheritance. It frees us from the deadening dread of a mysterious angry God who will some day come out of the cloud with whip and fetter in His hand. It colours all our life with the consciousness of a Father's love. But when we look forward, though we trust the same Father, we see only a little at a time. Step by step, past mistakes, falls, stumbles, errors, we travel onward, strangers and pilgrims both in the church and by the hearth. Hence we communicate frequently. Those who faithfully and frequently receive the Holy Communion do not find that their appetite therefore fails. We cannot treat God's grace as we do savoury food. We need not wait like epicures for an accumulation of spiritual hunger. We are never gluttoned with the bread of His word, nor drunk with the wine of His Spirit.

Notice, moreover, that we are not offered the prison diet of bread and water, but bread and wine, as if these were intended to be a commentary of cheerfulness, and not mere dull nutriment in the grace of God. This, too, is agreeable to our experience of God's world, in which, however it be described by some, there is much to gladden the life both of man and beast. Those who cry down earthly blessings are seldom sincere in speech. We should recollect that every good gift cometh down from the Father of lights, and that although it is useless to mourn over losses which we cannot escape, it is unnatural to insult the senses which we are obviously intended to use.

CONFIRMATION AND THE WORK OF LIFE.

THERE is a divine and there is a human side to Confirmation. Shrewd arguers, who look at Christianity from the selfish side, and take more notice of what we do for God than of what He does for us, are especially exacting in this matter of confirmation. Seeing in it mainly a solemn vow, requiring all clearness of thought and strength of adult will, they shake their heads at the notion of young children kneeling down before the grave minister of the church, for an imposition of hands which is associated with the responsibilities of mature ministry and devotion.

I do not wonder at this. It has always been so. Severe professors of religion are often tempted to look superciliously on its divine and mystical side. It was so in the old time. Simple mothers brought children to Christ that He should put His hands on them and pray,

and the very disciples rebuked them. They objected, just as some now object to confirmation on account of the youth of those who are presented. They assert that it is an ordinance of which the children cannot be expected to form a right and ripe judgment, that they are too young to understand it fully. Yes, I suppose they are. I should be very sorry if any young people whose confirmation I had to do with, thought that they could explain the whole business. I cannot imagine that our Lord saw an assurance of comprehension in those poor sunburnt Galilean peasant children who were led or carried by their parents to His holy arms, and looked shyly up into His sad kind face when He put His hands on them and prayed. I think that any sensitive reader of this story in our Lord's life will feel that it is a great support to the practice of confirmation as now observed in the church.

But I would not rest merely upon the support of Scripture, in pleading for the admission of young people to solemn and mysterious rites. I would ask what reason we have, from experience, to set up age as a standard of fitness for the reception of divine influence. Are the old,

quid old, better and more accessible to spiritual influence than the young? Are they more simple, generous, open, truthful, and therefore Christian? Each age has its faults. Those of youth are noisier, less useful in the economy of worldly society than those of age. The young sinner sins openly, the old and wise sinner sins secretly. The world makes the first smart for his offences against it, the old take care not to offend society. The world is indifferent to their trespasses against God. That, it thinks, is God's affair, not society's. And they are right. It is God's affair, whose ways are not as our ways, and who, I reverently imagine, sees more unfitness to receive divine grace in those who make formal application for it in a selfish uneasy old age, than in those whom the shaky finger and querulous voice denounce as too young to approach the Lord in sacrament or sacramental rite. There is a grace afloat in the kingdom of God of which we partake through simple trust, and which we receive all the more fully when we do not sit down and calculate our fitness to receive it. If without affecting to understand the way in which God works, any child of the youngest

age at which confirmation is administered in the English Church, really wishes to live a better life, we may be sure that God will accept that willingness as the test of the child's fitness to be helped, and we may leave the proportion of grace to be given safely in His generous hands.

But I must say a word about Confirmation as a common-sense adaptation of the church's teaching to the necessities of life. There are some who look back with lingering fondness to the days of their youth, when the summer was longer and the world was brighter than they find it now. This may be very sentimental and interesting, but it is very silly and unchristian. Would those who complain thus really wish to remain children always? Do they admire adult childishness? Is there not something very sad in the sight of a woman clinging to the dress and language of girlhood? She cannot coax back the clock of time by her overgrown caresses. Is there not something ghastly in a gay sprightly old man? Do we not shudder at his youthful ways, and the tackle which supports or supplements his faded shape and shrunken limbs?

We had always better take the age which belongs to us, and leave the smiles and joys of youth for those that are young. They are passed. I do not believe they were so very sweet after all. Full grown buoyancy and work are better than any children's glee and school-room lesson. Every thing in its season. There is something unnatural in the deliberate gravity of a child, but there is something odious in the frolic airs and young dress of a stiffened figure and a hoary head.

Now confirmation teaches us early in life to face these changes in ourselves. When we leave the nursery and the school we must drop the manners which suited us there. Confirmation speaks seriously if not sternly to those who cling too closely to the nest when they are fledged enough to begin to fly and risk themselves upon their own wings.

But confirmation probably commends itself most to our understanding when we see how it meets the aspirations of the boy with sympathy and encouragement. Every clergyman, especially in a town, knows that the number of young men who present themselves for confirmation is considerably less than that of girls.

And while the girls are fair examples of young womanhood, the lads are not average specimens of young manhood. The more spirited and independent youths who have left school and are making their way in the world, look upon confirmation as a childish business, and in their anxiety to exhibit their escape from the direction of pastors and masters, decline having anything to do with it. It is associated with the catechism which they consider that they have outgrown. They have been under subjection long enough, and now they must assert their manliness. They are children no longer, and must not be treated as such. Two or three years have made a greater difference in their minds than any other period of their lives. They have come across thoughts which cannot enter the child's mind. They have grown ambitious, restive, contradictory, independent.

And this is well. I like to see this natural assertion of growing right. Old people would sometimes keep the young ones wholly down if they could. But the church knows better, and therefore she comes forward to the lad's support, and says, "You shall no longer treat him as a child; he must learn to think and act as a man."

But she says at the same time that these youths are not by any means full grown ; that their minds as well as their bodies want muscle and powers of endurance, that they want strength, or confirmation.

They may be full sized, like green fruit, but they are sharp and often very disagreeable to the taste. They are good and sound, but want ripening. And nothing but the warm quickening grace of God can do this for them. They have plenty of spirit, but they want the Holy Spirit, the spirit of firmness, counsel, sweetness, and strength, by which we are confirmed. Thus really confirmation is an assurance to young people of that very thing which they claim most sturdily, viz., the right to be treated more as men and women, and it teaches us what is the mark of true manhood, namely, the doing of the will of *God*. Face duty as duty, and then you are a man.

This is the burden of the catechism, which tells us that we belong to a heavenly family rather than to an earthly ; that the Christian name is the only one taken knowledge of by the Holy Catholic Church, and that the claim which God has upon us pre-

cedes, sanctifies, and enforces our duty towards man.

The real master to be served is not the public but the Lord. If you set yourself to do great things you will probably be disappointed. You try some grand scheme or project; not that it would be hailed as grand if it were published to the world, but it is grand compared with what you commonly do. You go out of your way to attempt it. You bestow labour and pains to get it done. But the world looks coldly on when you display your project. Your friends can't see it in the same light that you do. Your enemies and acquaintances possibly ridicule or oppose it. The chilly thought settles down at last upon your mind, as you stand alone in your efforts, "Why did I do this, why did I go out of my way to engage in this enterprise?" The real answer, bitter and sickening enough, is this. "I stepped out of my circle because I wanted to distinguish *myself*."

That was a mistake. If we are capable of distinguishing ourselves the time and way will probably come. Otherwise we laboriously create a failure and build our own disappointment. The man who spurs the horse of his

conceit to get the finger of the world pointed at him often succeeds, but only in making himself ridiculous or contemptible.

The men who are famous in history have generally grown to be famous, and almost all the discoveries and deeds which seem to be sudden are only the fruit of patient working and waiting. Any selfish ambition only shows that we are so far unfit for honourable distinction, whereas, on the contrary, if we do our duty we cannot be radically disappointed, for we do not depend upon results. Results, good and lasting, are more likely to come thus than by any other way, but we do not depend on them; if they come at all they come like gifts.

This is a true view of manly work, this the catechism teaches, this confirmation is intended to enable us in doing. I know that it is a very noble view. I know that many think it too high flown, especially for those who have dull vulgar toil to undergo, toil which the world thinks by no means great, which produces only a small wage, and bare victuals for the belly and clothes for the back. But the nobler view it is of Christian work, so much the more full of gladness is it to those whose work is counted

mean. It can bring down the radiance of the cross itself into the poorest home, and set the meanest trade among the noblest operations of the Lord.

Moreover, thus, by doing our duty, the interest of life is kept up. Those who are bound to serve God throughout, or, as the catechism puts it, pray that they may continue in the same unto their lives' end, have a career before them which stretches onward with bright and boundless hope. They are in the way of everlasting life, and the air grows more full of cheer, and the eternal gates show clearer to the eye, as they travel onward in the kingdom of Heaven. They are strangers and pilgrims, but they sing upon the road.

For it is marked with the footprints of the Lord. He came as the great exemplar and august performer of Duty in its highest holiest flight. "Lo! I come to do thy will, O God." That was the work of His life, and to do our work because it is God's will that we should do it, is the highest aim of which we are capable, for it was the aim of Jesus Christ our Lord.

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